

A DISCIPLE IS GIVEN A MISSION

MATTHEW 28:19-20

Well hey, good morning church! My name is Ben. I'm one of the pastors here at Summit. So good to be with you here this morning.

It's hard to believe that this is already the last Sunday of August. September starts this week! And so I just want to take the opportunity to encourage you, we've got Community Groups kicking off over the next few weeks, and if you aren't plugged in to a community group, we want to see you get plugged. We see Community Groups not just as another event that you feel obligated to go to during the week, but we see Community Groups as the primary way that we live as the church when we leave this building. You see church isn't a place that you go, but a people that you are. And so that means when you leave here you don't stop being the church. So on Sundays we gather as the church, and during the week we scatter into our neighborhoods and workplaces and communities, and Community Groups are a group of people that intentionally live as the church in those spaces. We eat together, share together, love and care for each other, we really become family with and for one another, and we're growing in this, but we also aim to be communities that reach out to others that don't know Jesus to give them a taste of what his church is like. OK? So if you aren't plugged in and you'd like to be, you can easily do that by filling out a Connect Card and dropping it in one of the mailboxes, or visiting the Connect Table after the service today and we'll get your name and information down.

Well, we are wrapping up the summer season by taking some time to look at what it means for us to follow Jesus, to live as his disciples. If you are sitting here this morning, and you are a Christian, then the foundational reality of who you are can be defined by that one word: DISCIPLE. And we are spending five weeks basically unpacking what that word means.

And what we've seen so far is that being a follower of Jesus first and foremost means that you've been saved, that you've been rescued, *by* Jesus. OK? So you can't genuinely follow Jesus if you just see him as a great example, a great moral teacher, a great man. I just saw on the news this week that Justin Bieber is bringing back the WWJD bracelet. Now, I'm not going to make any judgment on Justin Bieber's salvation, but you need to know that being a disciple is about more than just asking, "What Would Jesus Do?" To truly follow Jesus you have to believe that you need him, you have to believe that he is your savior, he is your rescuer.

And when Jesus saves you, something incredible happens. There is this exchange that goes on, your old life, the one that was defined by sin and selfishness and rebellion against God, dies with Jesus and gets exchanged for his perfectly righteous life. And theologians called this mystery, "union with Christ." And so the NT talks over and over and over again about how the new identity of a disciple is "in Christ."

Then we talked about how this salvation isn't just about you, but that God has a purpose much greater in actually creating a brand new kind of community. A community of Jesus-loving, Jesus-worshipping disciples that finds its ultimate fulfillment in the book of Revelation where we see this countless multitude of disciples from every tribe and tongue and language, worshipping the Lamb, who is Jesus.

Then last week, Tony talked about how the gospel actually draws disciples into obedience, and that true freedom for us as disciples come from living in joyful submission to Jesus and his commands. OK? So that brings you up to speed with where we are now.

Well, I just celebrated my birthday on Friday. I am officially on the back half of my 30s now. And I know to many of you I am still young, but I am starting to feel a bit old - especially when I am raising young children and starting to introduce them to the way life was when I was a kid. There's a disconnect there.

And it's just simple things. Like watching cartoons. OK, when I was growing up cartoons were on after school and they were on Saturday mornings, and that was it. I mean, if you had to stay home sick from school, the middle of the day was like the television wasteland for a kid. All that was on was Days of our Lives and talk shows. But for my girls, the idea that you would have to wait until 3:30 to watch your favorite show on Channel 12 is incomprehensible to them. They've grown up with YouTube and with Netflix and every show they could ever want on demand.

Think for a moment of the mammoth changes that have happened in culture and technology in just the last ten years. It was only 9 years ago that Facebook opened up to worldwide users. By the end of its first year it had 20 million users, which actually seems like a lot to me, but it's just a fraction of the 1.5 billion they have now. The original iPhone went on sale only eight years ago, in the summer of 2007, and the iPad didn't even come out until 2010. These are innovations that have totally changed the landscape of our lives.

50% of Americans now have a smartphone. For 80% of people under 45, the first thing they do after waking up is check their phone. Average person with Facebook on their smartphone checks it 14x a day. Did you know that there now are over a million apps that you can download on the iTunes store?

In 2015, we have movies on demand, television on demand, music on demand, NFL on demand, Jimmy Johns sandwiches on demand... I wish we had babysitting on demand... we have all these things quite literally at our fingertips.

Our culture is the most entertained culture in the history of planet earth, and yet we're also the most bored. We have more free time than ever in history, there's more available to do and taste and experience than ever before, and yet it's only served to make us lethargic and disinterested and depressed. Why is that?

Well, part of the answer is this: it's that the story that we've determined to live in is too small. The story that we've decided to put ourselves in the middle of is too small. What do I mean by that?

Well, what I want to show you this morning is that God has created you for a much larger, much grander, purpose than entertainment, or self-fulfillment, or career success, or getting married, or raising successful kids, or providing for your family after you die. These stories that we make our life about aren't big enough, they aren't epic enough, they don't have the breadth and the depth, to live up to what God has actually made you for.

And so we're going to look at that this morning by looking at three things: We're going to see, first of all, the grandeur of what God is up to in the world, what God's epic story is. And then we're going to see what he's given us to do as his disciples in that story, what our role is. And then finally we're going to talk really practically about how we start living our part of the story out well. So we'll put those thoughts in the form of three questions: What is God doing? What has he sent us to do? and How do we do it?

1. What is God doing?

In other words: "what is God up to in the world?" What is the fundamental goal, the ultimate purpose, the center of gravity for all that God has done, all that he is doing, and all that he will do? What is God about? You see, God isn't just "bout that action, boss" there is something that God is doing and accomplishing in his creation - from the reproduction of the smallest cell to the supernova of a star to God's redemption plan for humanity, God is moving his purposes for all of creation toward one end. And so this is the question: What is God's mission in this world?

And it's right here that most Christians start making God's story smaller. Because you see, isn't God's mission about me? Isn't the reason that everything exists, the reason that God does what he does, so that he might save me and forgive me, so I can be a good Christian in this world and have good Christian kids who live in a safe and comfortable Christian home where they're all raised with Christian values and then we'll all join together with Jesus in heaven when we die? Isn't that God's mission? Doesn't the Bible show us that God loves us and protects us and shepherds us? Aren't we the point?

And so we go to the Christian gift shop and we buy our coffee mugs with Psalm 23 screened on the side to remind ourselves every morning that God is about us right? "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness." And God does all of that incredibly doesn't he? He is our rescuer, our protector, our provider, our comfort, our shepherd. But the question is why does he do those things? And so because we are so self-centered and myopic in our worldview, we forget to read the end of Ps. 23 verse 3 which says that God does all of these things, "for his name's sake."

And this thought isn't just isolated to Psalm 23, church. The central story of the Bible from cover to cover is that all that God does is not first and foremost for you or about you, but for and about God. And you know, if you are new to this whole Christian thing, or if you are new to following Jesus, or if you are new to us here at Summit, this might be totally new to you. In our preaching over the last year we've touched on this at times, but we haven't laid this out so directly. That God's singular mission in this world is to put on display, for all of creation to see, his glory, his greatness, to make known his glorious name. The Bible reminds us of this over and over. Let me give you a taste of this:

- God created us for his glory. Is. 43:6-7: "Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory."

- God rescued Israel from Egypt for his glory. Ps. 106:7-8: "Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love.... Yet he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make known his mighty power."
 - God spared Israel in the wilderness for his glory. Ezek. 20:14: "But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations."
 - God restored Israel from exile for his glory. Ez. 36:22-23: "It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name... And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name... and the nations will know that I am Yahweh, declares the Lord."
 - You don't need to write all of these down, there's a sheet of them available with even more after the service. But do you see what God is doing? This is why God says in Mal. 1:11, "For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name... For my name will be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts." God's mission is to put on display his name, the glorious essence of who he is, to all of creation.
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- And then Jesus shows up, and his life, death and resurrection become God's climactic display of his glory. You see, in Jesus the glory of God came in human form. John's gospel tells us this. Jn. 1:14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." And so suddenly the focus of God's glory zooms in on Jesus.
 - And though Jesus lived an utterly sinless life, perfectly obeying and glorifying his Father, he ends up going to the cross to die in place of sinful humanity. Rom. 3:24 tells us that Jesus' death was about displaying the value of God, not our value.
 - Through Jesus' death, God forgives our sins, not primarily for us but for his glory Is. 43:25: "I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake."
 - And as we start thinking about the ultimate end that God is moving his creation toward, church, it's that the universe will be filled with God's glory. Hab. 2:14: "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."
 - And then we get to this picture again that we looked at a couple of weeks ago, in the book of Revelation, and we see that God's plans for the cosmos come together, and they aren't all about us, they are all about Jesus. The focal point of God's new creation, The central focus of God's people in God's place is a bloody slain lamb. Disciples from every tribe and tongue and nation are gathered, ones who have been cleansed by this lamb's blood, and with all their heart, and with all their soul, and with all their strength, and with all their might they are worshipping Jesus, the lamb slain. Rev. 21 tells us that this place doesn't even need the sun, because it is lit by the the lamp that is the glory and wonder and beauty of Jesus.

So let me say this again clearly for you, church. *We* are not God's mission in the world. God's mission is to demonstrate his glory, to show his greatness, and he does that in many ways, but he does that ultimately in Jesus. Jesus is the focal point, Jesus is the center. The

knowledge and worship and kingship of Jesus is what creation has been moving toward, because God has determined that Jesus will be where his glory is most densely, most fully, put on display.

Do you see the wonder of this? Do you see the grandeur of what God is up to here? If you leave here this morning only understanding this one thing, it has the potential to be life-changing. This is the only thing that can give you real joy, because you'll stop following a tiny God of your own making, whose primary reason for existence to meet your needs, and you'll be captivated by a God who has an end goal that involves you but isn't centered on you. A God who is big and glorious and awesome and utterly worthy of your worship.

And that is what God is after, isn't he? You see, there is pattern God uses to make known his glory in and through Jesus. He calls and draws and saves rebellious sinners like you and me. And then he forms us into joy-filled, Jesus-worshipping, Jesus-serving disciples, who are joined together in the brand new Jesus-centered community called the church.

When God saves disciples, he creates worshippers who bear his name and fill creation with his glory. OK, so we could add this to our understanding of what God is doing in the world. God's story is that he is showing his glory to the world, through Jesus by calling disciples, saved into a new community, who will worship him, and follow him, and make him known.

And so that leads us to asking a very specific question about ourselves. What has God sent us to do? What is our mission? As we follow Jesus, what should our life be about? What role do we play in this story that God is writing?

To answer that I want to take you to a story from Jesus' life in the gospel of Mark. You can turn with me if you'd like to Mark chapter 1 and v. 16.

Jesus has just started what Bible scholars call his "public ministry." John baptizes him in the Jordan river, and then Jesus goes out to the wilderness where he's tempted by Satan, and then he returns to Galilee, the area he grew up in, and on this particular day Jesus is walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee. And as he's walking along he looks out and sees these two men fishing.

Now these two men, we find out, are brothers, Simon and Andrew. And Mike Stone unpacked this passage for us a few weeks ago, but I want to highlight it again. Now these two brothers are basically carrying on the family business. It's likely that their family has been a fishing family for generations. These guys aren't white collar, educated guys, that decided that getting a trade was where it's at, they don't wear flannel and work boots and grow a beard because it's trendy. These guys are the real deal, with hands calloused by the nets they pull in and out each day, and the smell of fish that you just can't wash out, and so who they are, their total identity, is completely wrapped up in being fisherman. Their story, what they are living for, isn't real large. They get up early, they hit the sea, and they fish.

But suddenly Jesus comes along. And whenever Jesus shows up anywhere, everything changes right? Look what Jesus does - v. 17: "And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.'" (repeat). Jesus comes and he encounters these two blue-collar,

independent, rugged dudes and he fundamentally redirects their story. He's calling them into a hugely greater story than what their lives have been about. You see they've had the blinders on, focused on their life, and their livelihood, and their security, and their comfort, and Jesus lifts their eyes up, and he says, "there's a story, there's a mission, overarching all of this, in fact it's the story that you've been created for, and it's a story that's so much bigger than what you're seeing."

And so what we see right from the very beginning of the gospels is that when Jesus calls disciples to follow him, he draws them into God's story. And he gives them a mission.

And after Jesus resurrection we slowly start to see more clearly what that mission is. You see, Jesus shows up one night in a room where the disciples are hiding out in fear. (This is John 21) They think Jesus is dead and they think they're next. And Jesus promises them that the power of the Holy Spirit will fill them and empower them, and then he sends them out saying, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Jesus sends them out on a mission, and that mission, just like Jesus' mission, is all about seeing others drawn into God's story. Seeing others drawn, and saved, and growing as disciples of Jesus.

And that's what we see really clearly in Matthew 28 that we read this morning isn't it? Let me read it again. v. 18 - "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'" Jesus is saying to his disciples what we've already said - He's saying, I am the focal point of God's story. I'm what God is doing in the world. God's glory is displayed supremely in and through me! And then he gives them their mission.

v. 19 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

A disciple is given a mission. But, you know, most of the time we see this word "GO" here and we think, Oh, Go, this command is for the missionaries, for the people that go to Africa and China, and Peru, that's not for me.

But let me give you a quick Greek lesson that will help you to understand this verse. You see, in Greek grammatical structure normally in a sentence like this there's one main verb, and then a number of helping verbs, participles, words that describe how the action of the main command is supposed to be carried out. And so here in this sentence, the main verb, the main command, isn't "GO", it's "make disciples".

The word "go" here isn't a command at all, it's a description of *how* you "make disciples". And in fact, the tense of it is an action that continuous. So really, what Jesus is saying is "as you go", as you're going along in life, as you're in your neighborhoods, and in your workplaces, and at your family reunions, as you eat your meals, and bring your kids to soccer practice, and go grocery shopping, and go to the community center, in the everyday stuff of life, make disciples. Draw others into God's story.

Brothers and sisters, the way that God accomplishes his mission in the world is not through special Christian super-heroes that we call pastors and missionaries. It's through ordinary disciples who make disciples who make disciples. And this cycle of multiplication populates God's creation with Jesus-worshipping, Jesus-serving disciples who get joined

together into God-glorifying, God-worshipping communities of light in this dark world. This is the singular mission God's given you. Brothers and sisters, I'm not saying that this *should* be the purpose of your life, I'm saying that it *is* the purpose of your life.

But most of us don't approach the Christian life like this, do we?

There's a distinctly American cultural phenomenon that started to pop up in the last century. And it really started with increasing crime in the inner-city, and urban sprawl and the development of the American suburb. And if you live in South Hill you know this phenomenon well - it's called the cul-de-sac.

And the cul-de-sac was this great invention. It created a safe, quiet, low-risk place for families to raise their kids. No traffic came through. Strangers would only show up when they made a wrong turn and because it was a dead end if you didn't belong you turned around and left pretty quickly. But if you did belong, once you came in you didn't need to leave. There would be block parties, and all the neighbors would get the kids together for play times in this isolated little island community.

And my fear for us Summit, and it's because I know in my own heart how easy it is to do this, my fear is that our community here would become a Christian cul-de-sac. Especially with the mounting culture pressure that we as Christians are facing today, I'm afraid that it's all too easy for us to withdraw to the Christian suburbs so-to-speak. It's too easy to make following Jesus all about us and our comfort and our security. To see our life together just as a safe and comfortable environment to raise our kids. It's too easy to see this community as a haven from the risks and the dangers that are out there in the world. A place where you can hold onto your conservative values and your priorities without being challenged. It's too easy to create an isolated island community, a place where you can do life together with people that are like you, have these easy relationships with people who belong... and where outsiders who don't belong might come in once in a while, but quickly turn around.

But Jesus' disciples aren't supposed to move in and settle down. In the book of Acts that's what the disciples started to do and persecution blew that up. Jesus sends us out of our comfort and out of our security. He gives us a mission that isn't about ourselves. It's a mission that is inherently worldly. It welcomes the outsider, it invites those who don't belong. It reaches out to those who don't share our lifestyle. It intentionally pursues people who are consumed with their own glory and their own story to invites them into God's story .

This is the way communities of Jesus-serving, Jesus-worshipping disciples have always multiplied. How do you think it is that we are in Tacoma, WA in this community this morning worshipping Jesus together? I mean, I hate to be the one to break it to you, but this whole thing didn't start in America. It started with this tiny band of trembling, fearful followers in an upper room. But in between his resurrection and his ascension, Jesus promised his disciples his presence, he promised them that they would be filled with the Holy Spirit. And Christianity took off. In just 300 years, half the Roman Empire professed belief in Jesus. A movement exploded as ordinary disciples made disciples who made disciples.

And the center of that movement has always shifted. From the middle east to Europe, to Britain, to America, and now really the center of Christianity has shifted again to China, and Africa, and South America, and the shift always happens not because some super-Christians like Billy Graham or Charles Spurgeon show up on the scene, but because Jesus uses ordinary people to accomplish his purposes.

And think for a second about your own story. How are you sitting here this morning? You know, I can look back on my life and trace a straight line of people who opened up their life to me, who made their life uncomfortable, and invited me into it, and invited me into God's story. My parents, Brian and Susan Hamp, Dave Heidebrecht, Colin Nystrom, Jamie Munday, Dave Klassen - these people all didn't make life about themselves, but about inviting others into God's story. And I bet that most of you have people that come to mind for you as well. You wouldn't be here without at least a handful of those people.

Jeff Vandersteldt, who's a local pastor here in our area says it well when he says, "What God has done in us, he now wants to do through us." What God has done in us, in inviting us into his story, in using others to open up their lives to us to welcome us and give input into our lives, and to help see us grow, he now wants to do through us as we open our lives to others, and invite *them* into God's story, and see them grow and mature and multiply more disciples.

But how do we do this? And as we wrap up I want to get really practical. And I want to give you a couple of things here, but I want to start with one question. If this mission is the *one* thing that we are called to be about in our lives, if making disciples who fill the earth with the glory of God as they worship and serve Jesus, is what our lives are *for*, the question you need to think about on a deep level, whether you are single, or whether you're married and think about this alongside your spouse, whether you're in high school or you're retired, is "If we really believed that - what would it look like to make our lives about this mission?"

Because if this message of the gospel really is true, no matter how scary, or how impossible, or how intimidated we feel by this calling, the reality is that nothing else matters.

Let me talk to you first on that level, as individuals and as families. What would it look like to make your life about making disciples, inviting others into God's story?

Well, if you're parents, you have little sinners that need to be invited into God's story right in front of you every day, so do not neglect that. That is your primary disciple-making responsibility.

But what would it look like to open up your life to others? You know, making disciples shouldn't be just another task we put on our calendar, it's something that we do by inviting others to join us in the regular rhythms of our life and intentionally engaging them in those spaces. To have intentional conversations with another dude as we're grilling burgers, or with that gal as you're washing up after dinner or watching the kids on the playground. It's in the everyday stuff of life that God's mission gets accomplished.

And I'm not only talking about engaging people who don't know Jesus at all here. Let me just give you a really, really practical thought. I just want to propose something to you. What if you asked God to give you three people, and I'm saying this whether you are in high school, or

a young family, or empty nesters, or retired. One who doesn't know Jesus, one who's growing in knowing Jesus, and one who is further along than you in knowing Jesus. And what if you intentionally and redemptively connected to those people once a month each? So that means that 3 out of 4 weeks each month - one day, maybe for dinner or dessert or an outing - full of prayer and planning for God to meet you and them together. Now considering summer and holidays that would mean that 9-10x a year you'd be connecting to the same people that either needed to be invited into God's story, encouraged to grow in God's story, or growing yourself in God's story.

Maybe you say, Ben, I'm not ready for that. I'm a new Christian, I'm way too messed up for that, God is still growing me - well welcome to Jesus' community. That's all of us. And God is even more delighted to use broken people to show his glory. Maybe you grab someone that's broken like you are and you say - hey, my life's a mess, you're life's a mess, can we meet together and ask Jesus to heal our mess and together and read the Bible to see how Jesus promises to do that?

This might be totally out of the box for some of you. Maybe you've seen disciple making as the job of the church right - I'll invite my friends to church and the pastor will tell them about Jesus. But God has given you this mission. Are you pouring into people, or are you making life about you?

God's call to move overseas.

God's call to move across the county. Planting churches, investing in Summit-Waller, neighborhoods.

Come to the communion table - wrap up how this is symbolic promise of Jesus presence - Matt. 28:18-20 bracketed by two great promises. Summed up in the communion table.